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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

DDI Reg.

C/NIC

National Intelligence Council

NIC# 00665-86
10 February 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, National Intelligence Council

VIA: Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council
National Intelligence Officer for General Purpose Forces

FROM: [REDACTED] 25X1
Assistant National Intelligence Officer for
General Purpose Forces

[REDACTED] 25X1
Assistant National Intelligence Officer for
General Purpose Forces

SUBJECT: Soviet Aircraft Carrier and Montreux Convention

1. On 7 February we attended an ad hoc IG on the subject to determine how to reply to a US Mission NATO cable which recommended that the US encourage NATO allies to recognize the recently launched Soviet ship as a true aircraft carrier but avoid "Turk bashing" when the ship departed the Black Sea. Our attendance was primarily to ensure that the policy attendees were aware of the latest community views on the nature of this carrier.

2. The IG reached tentative agreement on the cable enclosed in the attachment. We believe our role in the matter remains only to ensure that the planners are kept advised of latest intelligence developments.

3. Unless otherwise advised, we will concur in the cable by 21 February.

[REDACTED]

Att: a/s

cc: SOVA
SOVA/RIG
SOVA/SF/N
EURA
EURA/EI/SI

~~SECRET~~

CL BY Signer
DECL OADR

NIC# 00665-86
10 Feb 86

MEMO TO: C/NIC

VIA: VC/NIC
NIO/GPF

FROM: A/NIO/GPF (GM)
A/NIO/GPF (TF)

SUBJECT: Soviet Aircraft Carrier and Montreux Convention

A/NIO/GPF [redacted] (10 Feb 86)

25X1

Distribution:

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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 7, 1986

MEMORANDUM

TO: OSD/ISP:Col Mike McNamara
 OSD/ISP/NATO Policy: Col Bob Weekley/Col Stan Whitmore
 OJCS/J-5:LTC Steve Norton
 OPNAV (OP-614): CAPT Soverel
 OPNAV (OP-616): LCDR Ron Neubauer
 L/PM: Dennis Foreman
 EUR/RPM:Jim Davis
 EUR/SE: Angel Rabasa
 INR/PMA: CDR Jim Fronconeri
 NIC: [REDACTED]

225X1

FROM: PM/ISP: CDR Bill Hickman

SUBJECT: Soviet CV and Montreux Convention

In July 1985 US Mission NATO sent a cable to Washington discussing the impending launch of the first Soviet aircraft carrier in the Black Sea and its relationship to the Montreux convention. Drawing on our historical experience with the Turks and the rest of the allies in 1976 over the KIEV, US Mission NATO concluded that the Turks will allow passage of the ship no matter what the allies say. Therefore, it is in our interest to focus the public discussion on the quantum improvement in Soviet naval capability rather than on allied wrangling over the applicability of the Convention. To this end, the cable recommended an approach to the allies.

PM convened an ad hoc interagency working group to consider our response. That meeting resulted in a State draft response which was circulated in the various agencies and bureaus to elicit policy positions. Since that time the ship has been launched and several public statements about it made by various USG officials. Because the policy positions have not yet been finalized, the ad hoc IG met again on 7 February to consider the best course of action.

After extensive discussion, the ad hoc IG agreed that although some aspects needed to be updated, the issues identified in the NATO cable and the draft response remain valid. Therefore, it was agreed that the response would be recirculated for clearance. Accordingly, request clearances on the attached cable be provided to me at 647-1862 by 21 February.

~~SECRET~~
 DECL:OADR

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0458S

PM/ISP:WFHICKMAN EUR/RPM:JDAVIS
02/07/86 EXT. 71862
PM:JHAWES/EUR:RHAASS

EUR/RPM:RCALDWELL
L/PM:DFOREMAN
JCS/J-5:BGEM DREW
PM/ISP:CDUELFER

PM:TMCNAMARA
OSD:RPERLE
OPNAV:VADM JONES
EUR/SE:WROPE

ROUTINE USMISSION USNATO ROUTINE, NATO COLLECTIVE ROUTINE
ROUTINE SECDEF WASHDC ROUTINE, ISTANBUL ROUTINE

DECL:OADR

MARR, NATO, PHSA, UR

SOVIET AIRCRAFT CARRIER VS MONTREUX CONVENTION

JHRH
WHJD

RC
TM

REF: A. USNATO 04151 {DTG 121517Z JUL 85}

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. REFTTEL IS A THOUGHTFUL PRESENTATION OF A POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE PROBLEM FOR THE ALLIANCE. WE CONCUR WITH YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT THE RAMIFICATIONS OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO PREVENT PASSAGE OF THE NEW CONSTRUCTION SOVIET AIRCRAFT CARRIER {CV} OUT OF THE BLACK SEA. WE ALSO AGREE THAT IT IS IN OUR BEST INTEREST TO BEGIN ACTION TO SOLIDIFY OUR POSITION AMONG THE ALLIES TO PRESENT GOT WITH ALTERNATIVES WHICH CAN BE BOTH USEFUL TO THE ALLIANCE AND SUCCESSFUL.

3. RELUCTANTLY, WE MUST AGREE WITH THE BASIC PREMISE OF YOUR CABLE AND CONCLUDE THAT GOT PERMISSION FOR THE CV'S PASSAGE OUT OF THE BLACK SEA IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. OUR EXPERIENCE IN 1976 AND RECENT GOT STATEMENTS TEND TO CONFIRM THIS PESSIMISTIC VIEW. FURTHER, OUR LEGAL ANALYSIS INDICATES THAT LEGAL ARGUMENTS CAN BE MADE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE; I.E., THAT TRANSIT OF AIRCRAFT

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CARRIERS IS OR IS NOT PROHIBITED. WITH THAT AMBIGUITY IN MIND WE AGREE THAT WE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM TAKING A LEGALISTIC APPROACH WHICH SEEKS TO CONVINCE GOT TO OPPOSE THE CV TRANSIT. RATHER, WE SHOULD MOUNT A POLITICAL EFFORT TO EDUCATE THE ALLIES {ESPECIALLY GOT} ABOUT THE LESSONS OF 1976 AND THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PRESENT FOR FOCUSING PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE REAL PROBLEM, I.E., EXPANDING SOVIET NAVAL POWER.

4. WE AGREE WITH THE MULTINATIONAL POLITICAL APPROACH TO ALLIES AND SEE VALUE IN BLACK SEA OPERATIONS BY A VARIETY OF NAVIES.

5. ACTION ADDEES ARE INSTRUCTED TO APPROACH HOST GOVERNMENTS AT APPROPRIATE LEVELS TO MAKE POINTS BELOW AND SEEK THEIR VIEWS.

-- AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE 1936 MONTREUX CONVENTION RESTORED TURKISH SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE TURKISH STRAITS AND ESTABLISHED SIGNIFICANT RESTRICTIONS ON THE RIGHT OF WARSHIPS TO TRANSIT THE STRAITS.

-- IN 1976 THE SOVIET UNION DECLARED ITS KIEV ANTI-SUBMARINE HELICOPTER CARRIERS TO BE ASW CRUISERS AND THUS NOT SUBJECT TO CONVENTION RESTRICTIONS. GOT ACQUIESCED IN THIS INTERPRETATION AND ALLOWED THE KIEV TO TRANSIT THE STRAITS UNOPPOSED.

-- THIS DRAMATIC INCREASE IN SOVIET NAVAL CAPABILITY SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE FOCUS OF PUBLIC CONCERN, BUT AT THE TIME THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DISSENSION AMONG THE ALLIES AS TO THE APPROPRIATE INTERPRETATION OF THE CONVENTION. OUR ATTEMPTS TO DISSUADE GOT FROM ALLOWING THE TRANSIT WERE FRUITLESS AND LED ONLY TO STRAINED RELATIONS WITHIN THE ALLIANCE. THE SOVIET UNION WAS ABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON OUR DISPUTE AND DIVERT PUBLIC ATTENTION AWAY FROM ITS EXPANDING NAVAL CAPABILITY TO THE DISHARMONY IN THE ALLIANCE.

-- THE SOVIET UNION HAS RECENTLY LAUNCHED ITS FIRST AIRCRAFT CARRIER AT A SHIPYARD IN THE BLACK SEA. THERE CAN BE NO AMBIGUITY ABOUT THE FACT THAT THIS IS AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER AS DEFINED IN ANNEX II TO THE CONVENTION. BASED ON THE AMBIGUITIES OF THE CONVENTION AND OUR EXPERIENCES IN 1976 WE ANTICIPATE THAT NEITHER LEGAL OBSTACLES NOR DIPLOMATIC PROTEST WILL ULTIMATELY PRECLUDE TRANSIT OF THE SOVIET CV OUT OF THE BLACK SEA, AN EVENT THAT WILL PROBABLY OCCUR IN 1988.

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-- WITH THAT IN MIND, WE BELIEVE IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO THE ALLIANCE TO WORK TOGETHER NOW TO REACH A CONSENSUS ON THE ISSUE OF THE SOVIET CV TRANSIT. IN OUR VIEW, THIS CONSENSUS SHOULD SERVE THE FOLLOWING ALLIANCE OBJECTIVES:

A. PROTECT THE MONTREUX CONVENTION. THE CONVENTION AFFIRMS GOT SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE STRAITS AND RESTRICTS SOVIET WARSHIP TRANSIT RIGHTS. WITHOUT THE CONVENTION, LAW OF THE SEA RIGHTS OF TRANSIT PASSAGE WOULD APPLY, EFFECTIVELY FREEING SOVIET SUBMARINES FROM PASSAGE RESTRICTIONS.

B. SUPPORT GOT IN ITS POSITION AS REGULATOR OF STRAITS TRANSIT. THIS AFFORDS A WESTERN ADVANTAGE AND REMINDS THE SOVIET UNION THAT GOT, A WESTERN ALLY, ADMINISTERS THE STRAITS REGIME.

C. PROJECT A COMMON NATO RESOLVE. IN 1976, THE KIEV NOT ONLY TRANSITED THE STRAITS UNCONTESTED BUT CAUGHT ALLIES WRANGLING OVER THE CONVENTION AND MADE THE GOT EXASPERATED WITH EVERYBODY. THIS CAUSED UNNECESSARY SOVIET GAINS.

D. FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON GROWING SOVIET NAVAL POWER. UNLESS THE ALLIANCE PREEMPTS THE ISSUE, COMMENTARY WILL FOCUS ON LEGAL QUESTIONS INSTEAD OF THE REAL PROBLEM.

-- WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS IN THE ALLIANCE INTEREST TO PRESSURE GOT TO ADOPT A PARTICULAR INTERPRETATION OF THE CONVENTION. NOR DO WE BELIEVE IT IS IN THE ALLIANCE INTEREST TO ACQUIESCE TO A SOVIET DECLARATION OF THE SHIP AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER. TO DO SO WOULD IMPLY THAT THE ALLIANCE IS UNWILLING TO TACKLE DIFFICULT ISSUES DIRECTLY, A MISIMPRESSION THAT HAS RAMIFICATIONS OUTSIDE THE ISSUE UNDER CONSIDERATION.

-- WE THEREFORE WILL NOT QUARREL WITH GOT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONVENTION WHICH MIGHT FACILITATE TRANSIT OF THE SOVIET CV, PROVIDED THE SHIP IS TREATED AND DECLARED TO BE WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS, AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER. WITH SUCH A DECLARATION PUBLIC COMMENTARIES CAN BE FOCUSED ON THE GROWING SOVIET NAVAL THREAT.

-- WE INTEND TO PROVIDE THESE ASSURANCES OF SUPPORT TO GOT, BUT WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A UNIFORM APPROACH TO GOT. WE WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED, THEREFORE, IN YOUR GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS.

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5. FOR LONDON, PARIS, AND ROME. YOU SHOULD ALSO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- WE SEE VALUE IN MONITORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOVIET CV DURING ITS COMPLETION AND INTIAL OPERATIONS PRIOR TO ITS DEPARTURE FROM THE BLACK SEA AND ARE PREPARED TO CONSIDER PARTICIPATION IN MULTINATIONAL NAVAL PATROLS TO ACHIEVE THAT END.

-- ALTERNATIVELY, WE BELIEVE THAT SEQUENTIAL NATIONAL NAVAL PATROLS COULD ACHIEVE THE SAME ENDS, AND WOULD BE INTERESTED IN YOUR VIEWS ON THIS POINT AS WELL.

6. THIS IS A JOINT STATE DEFENSE MESSAGE
YYY/Y

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ADDRESSEES:

ROUTINE USDOCSOUTH NAPLES IT
USLOSACLANT NORFOLK VA
USMNR SHAPE BE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
JCS WASHDC
CNO WASHDC
USDELMC BRUSSELS BE POUCH